

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 IO-13 HA-05 CIAE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 TRSE-00 ACDA-12 MCT-01 /108 W
-----019630 221331Z /72

P R 220800Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0000
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
DIA WASHDC//
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE//J2 & EUDAC
USEUCOM AIDES VAIHINGEN GERMANY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 3426

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, MOPS, LE
SUBJ: WHO KILLED TONY FRANJIYAH? - III

REF: BEIRUT 3289

1. SUMMARY. PHALANGE POLITICAL BUREAU MEMBER SAMIR ISHAK, WHO APPLAUDS PHALANGE MILITARY OPERATION AGAINST FRANJIYAHS AT IHDEN, SAYS PHALANGE POLITICAL BUREAU WAS UNAWARE OF OPERATION BEFORE IT TOOK PLACE, BUT MOST MEMBERS ENTHUSIASTICALLY APPROVED IT AFTERWARDS. MARONITE PUBLIC OPINION WAS SHOCKED INITIALLY, BUT IS NOW COMING AROUND. THE SYRIANS MAY SEE THE OPERATION AS A THREAT TO THEMSELVES, BUT ULTIMATELY THEY WOULD PREFER TO DEAL WITH ONE PARTY IN CHRISTIAN LEBANON, THE PHALANGE, RATHER THAN A MULTIPLICITY OF GROUPS.
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END SUMMARY.

2. EMBOFF CALLED ON SAMIR ISHAK, PHALANGE POLITICAL BUREAU MEMBER AND FORMER DEPUTY ON JUNE 21.

3. POLITICAL BUREAU ROLE IN IHDEN OPERATION. ISHAK, WHO IS AN EBULLIENT TALKER, OFFERED A LONG AND DETAILED ACCOUNT OF

THE EVENTS THAT LED UP TO THE IHDEN MASSACRE. RIVALRY BETWEEN THE PHALANGE AND THE NORTHERNERS WENT BACK MANY YEARS, WHICH WAS SUPPRESSED DURING THE WAR, FOR THE SAKE OF THE ALLIANCE WITH FRANJIYAH. THIS CONSTRAINT WAS REMOVED WHEN FRANJIYAH HIMSELF BROKE WITH THE LEBANESE FRONT AND MADE HIS RECONCILIATION WITH KARAME IN EARLY MAY. THE GROWING INCIDENTS DURING MAY FINALLY BECAME INTOLERABLE FOR THE PHALANGE WHEN ZGHARTA PHALANGE DEPUTY LEADER JUDE AL-BAYIH WAS ASSASSINATED BY WHAT ISHAK CALLED A GROUP OF GUNSLINGERS, EACH OF THEM RESPONSIBLE FOR SEVERAL MURDERS IN THE PAST, IN THE PAY OF THE FRANJIYAHS. THE PHALANGE POLITICAL BUREAU, ISHAK SAID, WAS OUTRAGED AT AL-BAYIH'S DEATH AND WANTED RETRIBUTION. HOWEVER, THE SPECIFIC OPERATION AGAINST IHDEN WAS NOT REPEAT NOT DISCUSSED OR APPROVED BY THE POLITICAL BUREAU AT ANY TIME BEFORE IT TOOK PLACE.

4. AFTER THE OPERATION, THE POLITICAL BUREAU MET ON JUNE 14. THE GENERAL (BUT NOT UNIVERSAL) SENTIMENT OF THE BUREAU MEMBERS WAS TO ENTHUSIASTICALLY APPROVE THE OPERATION, AND MANY WORDS OF CONGRATULATIONS WERE OFFERED TO BACHIR GEMAYEL AND OTHER MILITIA LEADERS PRESENT AT THE MEETING. THERE WAS SOME GRUMB-
LING ABOUT THE KILLING OF TONY FRANJIYAH'S WIFE AND DAUGHTER, BUT THIS WAS HEAVILY OUTWEIGHED BY JUBILATION AT THE SUCCESS OF THE OPERATION IN KILLING TONY FRANJIYAH. ISHAK REFERRED TO THE OPERATION AS "ENTEBBE-LIKE." IT WAS INSPIRED BY THE ISRAELI TACTIC OF HITTING HARD, MAKING SURE THE ADVERSARY UNDERSTOOD
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THAT HE WOULD PAY, NOT AN EYE FOR AN EYE, BUT A MUCH GREATER PRICE.

5. POLITICAL IMPACT. ISHAK SAID THAT PUBLIC OPINION AMONG MARONITES IN EAST BEIRUT HAD INITIALLY BEEN SHOCKED, PARTICULARLY BY THE ASSASSINATION OF TONY FRANJIYAH'S WIFE AND DAUGHTER. HOWEVER, THE LIQUIDATION OF TONY FRANJIYAH HIMSELF WAS GENERALLY APPLAUDED, AND PEOPLE WERE BEGINNING TO REALIZE THAT FRANJIYAH FAMILY OPPRESSION OF THE NORTH AND ATTEMPTS TO EXPLOIT CHRISTIANS ELSEWHERE COULD ONLY BE HANDLED IN THAT WAY. ISHAK STRESSED SEVERAL TIMES THE VARIOUS KINDS OF FRANJIYAH EXPLOITATION OF THE CHRISTIAN POPULATION, SUCH AS TAKING A CUT OF CASINO DU LIBAN REVENUES, AND CONTROLLING RETAIL DISTRIBUTION OF CEMENT FROM THE DOUMIT CEMENT PLANT AT SHEKKA. OTHER CHRISTIAN GROUPS INCLUDING THE GUARDIANS OF THE CEDAR AND TANZIM, HE CLAIMED, HAD DISCRETELY LET THE PHALANGE KNOW THAT THEY APPROVED THE OPERATION. CAMILLE CHAMOUN, HE NOTED, WAS CAREFULLY STAYING VERY CLOSE TO THE PHALANGE POSITION ON THE RAID. WITH CONSIDERABLE GLEE, ISHAK OPINED THAT CHAMOUN WAS FRIGHTENED THAT HE WOULD BE NEXT ON THE LIST.

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-----018792 221332Z /72

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6. ISHAK LEFT NO DOUBT ABOUT HIS OWN VIEW OF THE OPERATION.
AT ONE POINT HE SAID SIMPLY, "MIGHT MAKES RIGHT." AT ANOTHER
POINT, HE SAID "I AM OPPOSED TO ASSASSINATION IN PRINCIPLE,
BUT THIS IS LEBANON NOT SWITZERLAND." HE SAID IF THE ZGHARTAWIS
RETALIATED BY KILLING A GEMAYEL OR A POLITICAL BUREAU MEMBER,
THE PHALANGE MILITIA, WITH POLITICAL BUREAU APPROVAL, WOULD
WIPE OUT THE REST OF THE ENTIRE FRANJIYAH CLAN.

7. THE SYRIAN CONNECTION. ISHAK SEEMED TO BE OF TWO MINDS
ABOUT WHAT THE SYRIANS NOW MIGHT DO. HE SAID HE WAS WORRIED
ABOUT THE SYRIANS, BUT AT ANOTHER POINT HE THOUGHT THAT THE
SYRIANS WOULD ULTIMATELY PREFER TO DEAL IN LEBANON WITH A
SINGLE CHRISTIAN GROUP RATHER THAN WITH MANY. AT YET ANOTHER
POINT, HE SAID HE THOUGHT THAT THE OPERATION WOULD SERVE AS
AN OBJECT LESSON TO THE SYRIANS. THE PHALANGE WAS READY,
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WILLING AND ABLE TO STRIKE HARD AT OPPOSITION FROM ANY QUARTER.

IF THE SYRIANS WERE TO GET INTO A FIGHT WITH THE PHALANGE IN EAST BEIRUT, HE SAID THEY WOULD VERY PROMPTLY LOOSE TWO HUNDRED TANKS TO THE PHALANGE AND MAKE IT STRONGER THAN EVER. HE NOTED ENTHUSIASTICALLY THAT DURING BOTH THE FAYYADIYAH INCIDENTS IN FEBRUARY AND AGAIN DURING THE AYN AR-RUMMANEH-SHIAH INCIDENTS IN APRIL, THE SYRIANS HAD LOST OVER 100 KILLED.

8. DURING THE CONVERSATION, KARIM PAKRADOUNI CALLED ISHAK, AND TOLD HIM HE WAS GOING TO DAMASCUS THAT DAY. WHAT WOULD PAKRADOUNI TELL THE SYRIANS? ISHAK WAS NOT SURE, BUT COMMENTED THAT PAKRADOUNI WAS A VEY CLEVER FELLOW INDEED, AND HAD ALREADY BEEN IN TOUCH BY TELEPHONE WITH SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM. IN SOME WAY OR ANOTHER PAKRADOUNI WOULD FIND A WAY TO NEUTRALIZE POSSIBLE SYRIAN REACTION.

9. SOUTH LEBANON. AFTER SOME DISCUSSION OF THE SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON, ISHAK SAID HE THOUGHT THE BEST INTEREST OF THE PHALANGE WOULD BE TO SUPPORT, REPEAT SUPPORT, UNIFIL DEPLOYMENT THROUGHOUT THE BORDER AREA, AND HE WOULD TAKE THIS LINE OF ARGUMENT WHEN THE MATTER WAS TO BE DISCUSSED AT A POLITICAL BUREAU MEETING ON JUNE 22. HE SAID HE KNEW SEVERAL OF THE MILITIA LEADERS IN THE SOUTH; "THEY ARE NOT VERY BRIGHT," BUT HE WONDERED IF ISRAELI TRAINING AND DIRECTION HAD IMPROVED THEIR CAPABILITIES IN RECENT MONTHS. HE ASKED IF THE UN FORCES IN THE SOUTH REALLY COULD CONTROL THE PALESTINIANS; EMBOFF SAID THAT THE UN HAD A VERY SERIOUS FORCE OF 6,000 TROOPS NOW IN THE SOUTH AND THAT CONTINUED CHRISTIAN MILITIA OPPOSITION TO UNIFIL WAS THE PRINCIPAL OBSTACLE TO UN ACTION TO CONTROL THE PALESTINIANS. ISHAK SAID HE AGREED: "THE ISRAELIS CAN TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES." HE SAID THAT HE WOULD URGE THE PARTY TO SEEK TO BRING BACK THE MILITIA FROM THE SOUTH: "NOW WE HAVE MORE NEED FOR THEM HERE."
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION, MURDER, DEPENDENTS, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BEIRUT03426
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780260-0775
Format: TEL
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780632/aaaabbng.tel
Line Count: 209
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: dda9bf83-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 BEIRUT 3289
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2254155
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: WHO KILLED TONY FRANJIYAH? - III
TAGS: PINT, MOPS, LE, (FRANGIEH, TONY)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/dda9bf83-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014